

**Measuring social identity in the professional context of provision for  
pupils with special needs**

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## ***Abstract***

The educational inclusion of pupils with special, or additional, educational needs is being promoted internationally. One would expect that professionals for whom the group identity as 'special professional' is both important and perceived as being under threat, would only be supportive of inclusion if it could be orchestrated in a way which fosters that identity. This paper provides a review of the research literature concerning social group identification and perceived threat with particular reference to out-group derogation, perception of group structure and in-group affirming behaviour. This review provides the context for findings from a scale about social identity (devised for this research) concerning an e mail group oriented to professionals working with children with special needs (N=105). The survey identified three social identity factors (perceived typicality, public reference to the group and identification with prototypical group members). High (compared with low) e mail group message senders were less likely to see themselves as typical of workers in the field but more likely to identify with SEN as a group. The work has conceptual interest in that it supports recent theorising in social identity, and in an area for which there is a need for a greater variety of studies having good ecological validity. The work also has considerable relevance as an example of the possible application of psychological theories to the special needs context of fostering effective change concerning inclusion and integration.

## ***Background***

### Professional context: Special education under threat

The educational inclusion of pupils with special, or additional, educational needs is being promoted internationally (Jordan, 2000; Meijer, 2002). One would expect that professionals for whom the group identity as ‘special professional/educator’ is (i) important and also (ii) perceived as being under threat, would only be supportive of inclusion if it could be orchestrated in a way which fosters that identity. From this one might hypothesise the following theoretical typology about identity and inclusion:

	Strong ‘special’ identity	Weak ‘special’ identity
Work primarily in segregated settings	Cautious about / aversive to inclusion	Professional identity linked with other aspects of context
Work primarily in inclusive settings	Enthusiastic about inclusion: Find ways to sustain this identity eg as change agents/system innovators; drawing on ‘special’ support networks	Professional identity linked with other aspects of context

Professionals for whom ‘special educator/professional’ as a group identity label is important (termed here ‘special professionals’) are likely to work at finding ways to sustain this professional identity, even within an inclusive context. The virtual community of SEN-focused e-groups may supply reference points whereby this identity can be sustained and nurtured. One such group is the UK-based National Grid for

Learning's SENCO Forum (see Note 1). This is an electronic mailing list for professionals involved with children with special needs, who are using e-mail and the World Wide Web. Its original purpose was to provide an opportunity to discuss issues that related to support for pupils with special needs as well as the development of ideas and practice in special needs provision. The means for achieving this purpose stressed the discussion of issues of mutual interest; information and advice being given freely by a range of colleagues (Stevens and Wedell, 1996).

The SENCO forum is an open group, which can be joined by anyone including psychologists and other non-teachers. The forum also attracts people who have no professional role in the SEN field but are parents of a child with SEN. Members are not vetted but must register for membership of the forum through BECTA (British Education Communications and Technology Agency). The work reported here is an extension of one element within two larger studies focusing on the reported impact of forum use on members' professional knowledge and personal strengths (Lewis and Ogilvie, 2002). One potentially highly fruitful consideration in this context is the relationship between such e-mail usage (as a form of social communication) and aspects of perceived social and psychological identity. Given the current assumed threat to the SEN group distinctiveness (through inclusion), a number of effects may ensue related to strategies designed to maintain (or preserve) identity which can be related to e-mail use in this context. In the social psychological literature there is an abundance of work that has examined the effects of identity threat on social perception and behaviour. We suggest that use of the SENCO forum in this context can be interpreted as indicative of such social

psychological processes. Specifically, the extent of engagement with the forum could be an effective identity maintenance strategy on the part of professionals working in SEN fields who feel that their 'special' status is threatened. We provide a brief overview of the general principles governing the effects of identity threat below, before applying this theory to our analysis of behaviour in the present context.

### Social group identification and perceived threat

An important factor influencing social perception is that of group identification. The degree of one's group identification regulates not only motivational, but also cognitive and perceptual responses to social identity threat. Specifically, it is believed to influence the perceiver's reactions to self-stereotyping ('self-perceived prototypicality'), group stereotyping, intergroup differentiation, perceptions of group homogeneity and determinants of social categorisation (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 1997). Given that our interest here is how professionals working in SEN fields may respond to a generally perceived threat to their 'special' status, it would be useful to briefly consider previously observed reactions to such threat in different contexts. We consider three main identity maintenance strategies: (1) Out-group derogation, (2) Perception of group structure, (3) In-group affirming behaviour. We consider each in turn.

#### **1) Out-group derogation**

The reaction to identity threat that has received most attention is 'out-group' derogation. That is, a negative evaluation of relevant comparison groups in order to boost the relative

status of one's own (threatened) group (Spears, Doosje and Ellemers, 1997). Threats to identity may not, however, come only in the form of negative evaluations.

'Distinctiveness' as well as a 'positivity' of the in-group identity is valued (eg professionals working in SEN fields might not only be threatened by a low evaluation of their worth, but also by the perception that their distinctive special status relative to other professionals is being eroded). When identification with the in-group is high, distinctiveness threat can motivate a *reactive* increase in in-group favouritism (Jetten Spears, and Manstead, 2001; see also Hogg and Abrams, 1990; Jetten, Spears, and Manstead, 1997). Jetten et al. (2001) found a positive and linear relationship between distinctiveness and the extent to which people's own group was favoured over a comparison group (as perceived distinctiveness increased, so too did this bias). Similarly, Henderson-King et al (1997) found that perceived intergroup similarities only resulted in bias if the out-group was perceived as a threat to in-group identity. Jetten, Spears, and Manstead (1997) found that only prototypical group members (*vis-à-vis* peripheral) discriminated under conditions of low distinctiveness, proposedly because prototypical group members felt a stronger sense of commitment with their in-group. In a school setting, high identifying children exhibited increased bias as a function of threatened group identity, in contrast to low identifiers (for whom bias did not vary in response to the similarity manipulation; Roccas and Schwartz, 1993).

Recent studies have also demonstrated how inclusion into a super ordinate group, at the expense of former specific 'subgroup' identities, can lead to increased own-group favouritism (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000a, 2000b). This increased bias can be explained as a

motivated reaction against the loss of distinctiveness due to a merging of a valued specific identity into a bigger more general category (clearly here there is an analogy with the current situation regarding SEN professionals). In essence, when distinctiveness is threatened, and commitment to the group is high, perceivers can respond with increased discrimination (Allen and Wilder, 1975; Brown and Abrams, 1986; Diehl, 1988; Jetten et al., 1996; Jetten, Spears, and Manstead, 1997; Roccas and Schwartz, 1993).

Derogating relevant others is, however, not the only way that people can react to a threatened social identity, and other (and in many cases more preferable) strategies of identity maintenance are common.

## **(2) Perception of group structure**

‘Self-stereotyping’ refers to the process by which group members come to define themselves largely in terms of the ‘group’ characteristics whilst simultaneously suppressing any unique qualities that emphasises any different from the group norm. This process can be especially apparent when groups are threatened. Group members can then perceive themselves as more typical of a group, which can be seen as a means of potentially re-affirming commitment to the group identity. A set of studies by (Spears, Doosje, and Ellemers, 1997) is illustrative. Spears et al. carried out several studies examining the relationship between group identification and self-perceived prototypicality in response to identity threat. In the first experiment, threat was manipulated by inducing psychology students to compare themselves favourably or

unfavourably to physics or arts students on a number of dimensions. In general, high identifiers perceived themselves as more typical to the in-group. However, under identity threat (low status comparison) low identifiers displayed less self-perceived prototypicality than did high identifiers. This suggests that high identifiers remained committed to the group, whereas low identifiers attempted to distance themselves from the group under conditions of threat. These findings were replicated in a second experiment using non-evaluative distinctiveness threat. These experiments support predictions posited by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which asserts that increased intergroup similarity will threaten group distinctiveness, thus motivating attempts to increase one's prototypicality to the group.

As well as self-stereotyping, or the perception of the self within the group, threatened group members also appear to change their perception of how the *whole* group is structured. For instance, (Simon and Brown, 1987) demonstrated that minority groups (who can be assumed to feel some degree of identity threat in the presence of majorities) show an 'in-group homogeneity effect' (ie perceiving the in-group are less variable and more cohesive than the out-group). Perceiving intra-group structure in such a way can be viewed as a kind of psychological 'closing of ranks' to protect identity under threat. Related to this, Doosje, Ellemers and Spears (1995) found that when there was no threat, high and low identifiers perceived the in- and out-groups to be of equal variability. However, high identifiers viewed the in-group as being significantly more homogenous than low identifiers under threat. These results were replicated by a study which manipulated rather than measured identification, and reinforced the notion that



identification, and the psychological representation of group structure, are key elements in understanding how groups protect identity under threat.

The work above suggests that threat can be dealt with by group members not only in terms of out-group derogation, but also by changing how they think about their group. There are, however, ways that threats to identity can be dealt with proactively through changes in behaviour. Such behavioural strategies of identity maintenance can serve to re-establish a positive group identity by subtly boosting the in-groups status.

### **(3) In-group affirming behaviour**

One way to react against threat that does not require a negative evaluation is to ‘pull together’ as a group and work to ensure the group’s success. Behaviour that justifies the importance of a group can thus result in positive outcomes. For instance, Ouwerkerk, De Gilder, and De Vries (1999) demonstrated that threat to identity (low status) can lead to increases in group performance (a measure of commitment to maintaining the ‘usefulness’ of the group as an entity). Another more subtle behaviour that re-affirms identity is the use of language. For instance, when an in-group identity is threatened, positive in-group, and negative out-group, behaviours are described at a higher level of abstraction than are negative in-group and positive out-group behaviours (Maass, Ceccarelli, and Rudin, 1996). More abstract ways of describing events (eg, ‘they are aggressive’) are more effective at solidifying group differences than more specific ways of describing events (eg ‘they pushed the person’), serving as a subtle way of preserving

distinctiveness. In the present context this may be reflected in debates about ‘appropriate’ roles for school psychologists reflecting, for example, different degrees of abstraction/generalality concerning applied or theoretical positions.

Overall, this body of work suggests that when groups feel threatened, they can respond with a variety of strategies to re-establish a positive identity. These range from:

- derogating the out-group,
- changing their use of language, through to
- reaffirming in-group commitment via
  - perceiving greater self-typicality of the group, and
  - perceiving the group as more cohesive.

We postulated that in the context of a threat to a special professional’s identity, some reaction linked to the above strategies may be apparent. Specifically, we expected use of the SENCO forum to represent a behavioural strategy, similar to those outlined above, that may be used as a means to restore a positive group identity. E-mail usage in this context would provide a non-evaluative way to reassert group identity by providing a means for the threatened group members to ‘pull together’ and to allow them to define themselves more in terms of the group identity. Put another way, threat may be dealt with by our special professionals by increased usage of the e-mail forum as this provides a means of self-categorising and re-affirming commitment (identification with/typicality of) the group [(2) above] as well as a subtle behavioural strategy to increase group

coherence by increasing communication between group members ('pulling together', (3) above).

The relevance of this for education is illustrated in a recent study exploring these issues in relation to social identity and teachers in Europe (van Dick and Wagner, 2002). In the context of threat to the professional identities of special professionals involved in our studies, increased e-mail communication may be a form of identity management strategy, related to identification, and perceived prototypicality to the group.

#### E mail groups and identity

A flurry of research activity is exploring the impact of the Internet and, specifically, the use of e-mail discussion groups (Porter, 1997; Purves, 1998; Sassenberg, 2002). In brief, a higher rate of contributions are associated with members who have (1) a comparative lack of real-world social support (as one might expect to be the case for special needs coordinators, especially from smaller schools, in relation to SEN support) and (2) greater levels of skills/competence (Cummings, Sproull, and Kiesler, 2002). More active participation is associated with more reported benefits and stronger group orientation (Cummings et al 2002). If supportive others share the e-group discussion then proportionately greater benefits are reported (and vice versa).

Members who feel attached to the group as a whole (a common identity) will adhere more strongly to group norms in terms of paralinguistic symbols than will members who

feel attached to individual others (a common bond) (Sassenberg 2002). Thus taken together, we might expect to find a correlation between differential use of such group markers in e-mail messages to the group and affiliation with the social group identity represented by the group.

More specifically, the use of e-mail forums may be linked explicitly to the maintenance of social identity, particular for those groups who feel that the distinctiveness of their group (in this case, professionals working with pupils with special needs) is under threat. Put another way, when a threat to identity is perceived, a number of identity-related effects have been observed, which may have clear relevance in this context.

### ***Method***

The measure used to assess social identity in this research was based on a modification of the scale developed by Karasawa (1995). We chose this scale because it measures multiple aspects of identification (see below) and has proved both useful and influential in a variety of contexts. It has been used in a range of theoretical and applied investigations of social identity processes (eg (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Cameron and Lalonde, 2001); (Karasawa, 1995); (Prentice, Miller, and Lightdale, 1994; Tropp and Wright, 2001; Veenstra and Haslam, 2000) suggesting applicability to diverse contexts.

This social identity and SEN scale (SISS) consisted of 7 statements:

1. Would you think it accurate if you were described as a typical teacher of children with special educational needs (SEN)?
2. How often do you acknowledge the fact that you are a teacher of children with SEN?
3. Would you feel good if you were described as a typical teacher of children with SEN?
4. How often do you refer to the kinds of pupils with whom you work when you introduce yourself?
5. To what extent do you feel attachment to the school/unit in which you usually work?
6. Are there many teachers of children with SEN who influenced your thoughts and behaviours?
7. Are most of your best colleagues people who work with pupils with SEN?

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7 point scale (–3 through 0 to +3; converted to 1-7 point scale for data analyses) the extent to which they felt each statement was applicable in relation to interactions with staff from their own schools compared with those from other schools.

#### Pilot study 1:

The scale was trialled first with 8 staff (teachers and aides) in one special school. The purpose of this pilot was to explore whether the scale would be acceptable to

professionals working in a special school and hence whether it would be likely to generate a reasonable response rate when used more widely. The school involved (a large school for pupils with moderate mental retardation) had been involved in a funded research project in the same region, conducted by one of the researchers. The scale was distributed as a stand alone attitude measure. Responses to this pilot were encouraging with all sections completed and, from informal feedback, there were no major problems with interpreting the scale.

#### Pilot study 2:

The scale was then trialled with 24 staff (teachers and aides) in 8 special units from the same school region as that in Pilot study 1. However this time the scale was embedded in a longer questionnaire about attitudes and beliefs concerning educational inclusion. Response rate per statement was similar across the statements with most statements eliciting a response and a 100% response rate for statements 5 and 6. The response patterns had face validity with a bias towards respondents seeing themselves as linked with a 'special' social identity (reflected in mean scores at the upper end of the scale, range of mean scores 5.19, sd 1.4 for item 7; mean 6.6, sd 0.67 for item 2). Given these encouraging responses to the pilot work, it was decided to use the scale in a national study concerning views about an e-mail support group (the SENCO forum) for those interested in educational matters concerning children with SEN.

### Pilot study 3:

Pilot studies 1 and 2 involved staff working in schools. It was not clear how relevant the SISS would be for workers with non-teaching backgrounds but who might nonetheless regard their main professional identity as linking with 'special educational needs'. To test the scale's suitability and accessibility for non-teachers, a modified version of the SISS (eg replacing 'school' with 'workplace') was incorporated into a longer questionnaire which focused on inclusion and children with special needs. At the time of the survey some pre-school provision in the region for pupils with SEN was thought by many of the professionals to be under threat of closure. There was open discussion about its possible reorganisation.

The questionnaire was distributed to all pre-school staff working with children with special needs in the region. A minority of these workers were educational psychologists (N=5) or health service personnel (N=5), the latter including occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and a consultant paediatrician. Completion rate of the SISS for these 10 workers was very high with very few non-responses to any of the 7 items. Means (4.14-6.63 per item) supported the use of the scale in this context with a strong tendency to express 'pro special needs' positions. Results had face validity with the least strongly supported item (3) referring to feelings if described as a typical worker with children with SEN. Conversely the most strongly positive ratings were given for item 5 (attachment to service; mean 6.63, sd 0.74) and item 6 (influenced by colleagues working with children with SEN; mean 6.13, sd 0.64).

Given these encouraging responses to the pilot work, it was decided to use the scale in a national study concerning views about an e-mail support group (the SENCO forum) for those interested in educational matters concerning children with SEN.

### Main study

It was hypothesised that those making greatest use of an e-mail support group relating to the teaching of children with SEN (the SENCO-forum) would have stronger social identities linked with SEN than would low users of such a support network. The above SISS scale was incorporated into a paper questionnaire probing impact on users of the e-mail group.

Respondents comprised a national (England) sample of 140 users of an e-mail support group for teachers, parents and others working with and/or interested in pupils with SEN. The sample was obtained through an open invitation to all users to complete the questionnaire, accessed through a web page as the e-mail group rules precluded sending out attachments. The survey forms were distributed in Spring 2002. The respondents were representative of the total forum membership at that time (840 members) in terms of objective measures such as school size in which users worked, proportions of children in those schools designated as having special needs and geographical spread across the country (Lewis and Ogilvie 2002, in press).



## ***Results***

### Social identity on individual scale items

Scores on all items (see Table 1) were above the midpoint indicating a moderate to strong degree of social identity with 'special educational needs' across a range of special educational needs educators and linked professionals.

Numbers of the 105 respondents completing the SISS scale and not in school based positions were comparatively few (2 Local Education Authority officers/inspectors, 2 speech and language therapists, 6 academics) precluding statistical analysis of social identity x professional role.

Table 1 about here

### Factor analysis of SISS items

A factor analysis of the SISS (see Table 2) generated three factors. The factor names reflect the items loaded on that factor:

factor 1 - perceived typicality

factor 2 - public reference to the group

factor 3 - identification with prototypical group members

Table 2 about here

A median split into high and low prototypicality users (factor 1) showed that people who regarded themselves as highly prototypical of the group also saw the group as having high relevance to themselves ( $M = 6.35$ ) compared with those who regarded themselves as more peripheral to the group ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $t [99] = -2.163$ ,  $p = .033$ ). This suggests that the group (SEN professionals) is a more relevant identity for those people who see themselves as typical SEN professionals compared to those who do not. This finding has face validity and supports the use of the scale.

#### Splits into high and low message senders - reliability of usage self reports

Results from the SISS scale were split to focus on two sub groups: (1) 'high message senders' (people who, from self-reports in the survey, sent public and private messages to the forum at least once a month) and (2) 'low message senders' (people who, from self-reports in the survey, sent fewer than one public message in 6 months). There were 47 respondents who were thus defined as high message senders and 37 who were low senders (the remaining 56 respondents falling into a middle band).

Reliability of this usage/sending of messages classification was checked by comparing these designations with numbers of messages sent by those in these groups in January-March 2002. Note - this check was based on those responding to the invitation in the survey (for follow up purposes) to provide e mail contacts. 97 respondents (69.3% of all

respondents) gave an e mail contact address; of whom 35 were high message senders (74.5% of this sub-group) and 24 were low senders (64.9% of this sub-group). The resultant cross-referencing of self-reports against actual public message sending supported the reliability of the designated categories (see table 3 below).

Table 3 about here

Figure 1 shows that the high message senders were less likely, compared with low senders, to see themselves as typical of workers in the field but more likely to identify with the group ('SEN').

Figure 1 about here

### ***Discussion of results***

We hypothesised that low identifiers would see themselves as less prototypical of the group and make less active use of the forum in terms of contributing messages.

Conversely high identifiers, as in the main study above, would (1) react to the threat of distinctiveness by perceiving themselves to be more prototypical of the group and (2) engage in identity enhancement strategies eg more sending of messages, particularly public messages.

High message senders identified more with the group (supporting the SIT based prediction that group commitment and use of the e-mail forum would be correlated). This suggests that the e-mail forum is useful for high identifiers and less useful for low identifiers. The fact that high message senders see themselves as less prototypical of the group (factor 1) is a little puzzling, but could be explained if these high message senders see themselves as the 'true campaigners' for preserving the group's identity (a 'subtype' of the overall group, distinct from the general group norm, (Brewer, Dull, and Lui, 1981). For example, this group may feel let down by the majority of special professionals who are perceived as not fighting sufficiently for their group distinctiveness. The increased use of the forum for those who perceive themselves as atypical of the group is also consistent with Social Identity Theory's notion that such 'peripheral' members seek to integrate with the rest of the group by engaging in behaviours to increase group cohesion (see (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 2002). Sending more messages, and being more involved in the forum, may be a way to achieve such a goal.

Another interpretation is that high message senders identified more with the group because they saw themselves as 'change agents' leading the way in taking issues about special needs to a wider audience as part of promoting inclusive educational practices.

Interestingly this would fit well with the shifting policy context of the work as this increasingly depicts the role of such professionals as one of changing the attitudes of others rather than providing specialist teaching techniques to individual pupils (DFES,

2001). Such a position might apply to school psychologists as well as to special needs teachers.

## ***General Discussion***

### **Applicability**

The development of a reliable and valid scale to measure SIT in the special needs context provides the potential for exploring sensitive and contentious issues of identity in this field. This has relevance across specific policy and cultural contexts; the use of a valid cross-cultural tool could disentangle policy and personal factors. For example, Polat in a study of school psychologists in Turkey, found that school psychologists with previous experience of pupils with SEN had more positive attitudes towards people with SEN than did those who had had no such experience (Polat 2001). It was beyond the scope of that study to explore why this was the case. One feasible explanation rests with their social identities.

Two examples illustrate the wider potential of exploring social identity in relation to special professionals. First, much of the discussion about appropriate teaching methods in relation to pupils with special needs reflects unwarranted claims concerning the pedagogic specificity required for such work (Lewis and Norwich 2000, Norwich and Lewis 2001). It is possible that such claims mirror a social identity strongly linked with special needs. Hence such claims about ‘effective’ pedagogy are not independent of the

social identity of the claimant but are probably strongly linked with that identity. If such links could be explored reliably and systematically then much of the current fiercely contested ground about pedagogy could perhaps be seen more usefully as a sign of social identification.

A second illustration concerns inter-agency work in the special needs context. This is a growing focus of work for many of these professionals and is reflected in the UK Government's recent policy moves towards 'family-centred' initiatives as part of moves to counter low school attainments. In the UK these span Health (eg Health Action Zones, Quality Protects Programme), social work (eg Sure Start, Children's Fund) and education (eg Education Action Zones) services. Despite advocacy of strong inter-agency working for the benefit of children and families, progress towards implementing such change has been slow and the difficulties of effective inter-agency working are well-documented (Cook, Gerrish, and Clarke, 2001; Granville and Langton, 2002; Webb and Vulliamy, 2001). It has become a truism that this requires 'new ways of working'. The nature of these 'new ways' is still unclear. Approaches that support social identities are likely to be more productive than strategies which, probably unwittingly, threaten such identities.

#### Threat and special needs in relation to policy

In brief, threat to social identity and special needs policy of fostering educational inclusion can be seen as pertinent at two distinct levels. First, threat is a highly relevant factor in the professional special needs context because, in the UK as elsewhere in

Europe, the 'special' sector is seen as being under attack through forceful government promotion of policies designed to increase educational inclusion. Yet as Evans and Lunt found, in a study involving school psychologists and other special professionals, there are considerable obstacles in the way of 'full inclusion' (Evans and Lunt, 2002). A burgeoning response to this is to argue for the creation of what are in effect new forms of special schooling such as 'co-location' projects (Letts, 2002) which, interestingly, can be seen as a way to retain a 'special' identity within an 'inclusive' system. Thus one potentially highly significant but neglected factor is that discussed here, the social identities of the professionals charged with bringing about such change.

Second, those cautious about inclusion from among the disabled (Low, 2001) have been attacked by those within the disability movement as 'selling out'. Further, an increasing fracturing and fragmentation in this movement is becoming apparent as the 'differently disabled' see the movement as privileging some impaired identities over others (Dowse, 2001; Humphrey, 2000). These different viewpoints may be explained by identity positions; that is, the strength or otherwise of disability group membership as a key aspect of social identity for the individual.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENT**

This paper has brought together conceptualisations about identity derived from social psychology with evidence about social identities gleaned from a range of professionals working with children with special needs. The comparative lack of perceived self-

typicality by those taking a particularly active part in the e mail exchanges concerning special needs topics coupled with high identification with the group suggests that the e mail group may be performing a vital function in sustaining a 'special' identity under threat. Current work is exploring this notion further to test the hypothesis that perceived threat to identity as a 'special' professional will be associated with increased self-categorisation as a 'special' professional. This would provide a theoretical explanation for the resistance and subversion of some 'special' workers (across various professional groups) in countering policy change towards inclusion. Thus, if the hypothesis is supported, responding effectively to such resistance will require a re-invention, not a loss, of 'special' identities.

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#### Note 1

To join the SENCO forum send the following e-mail:

To: [majordomo@ngfl.gov.uk](mailto:majordomo@ngfl.gov.uk)

Subject: (Leave blank)

**Body of message: subscribe senco-forum**

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Table 1: means and sd for each item on SISS

<i>Item</i> *	Mean	sd
Accurate if described as typical teacher of SEN	4.23	1.78
Acknowledge being a teacher of SEN	6.55	0.91
Feel good if described as typical teacher of SEN	5.04	1.86
Refer to kinds of pupils taught when intro self	5.67	1.35
Feel attachment to school/unit in which usually work	6.09	1.34
Influenced by many teachers of chn with SEN	4.92	1.45
Most of one's best colleagues work with SEN	4.38	1.72

N=105

[NB 35 of the 140 respondents to the full questionnaire gave partial or nil responses in this section so are omitted here. These non-responses reflected its inappropriateness for those individuals, e g they were parents of a child with SEN and did not have a professional role in the SEN field]

\* abbreviated here, see text above for statements in full



Table 2: Factor analysis of the SISS

<i>Item</i> *	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Accurate if described as typical teacher of SEN	<b>0.775</b>	0.090	-0.374
Acknowledge being a teacher of SEN	0.214	<b>0.744</b>	-0.093
Feel good if described as typical teacher of SEN	<b>0.796</b>	-0.109	-0.294
Refer to kinds of pupils taught when intro self	0.308	<b>0.646</b>	0.449
Feel attachment to school/ unit in which usually work	0.327	0.413	-0.204
Influenced by many teachers of chn with SEN	0.507	-0.413	0.307
Most of one's best colleagues work with SEN	0.405	-0.314	<b>0.683</b>
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	<i>1.901</i>	<i>1.431</i>	<i>1.039</i>
<i>Variance accounted for (%)</i>	<i>27.164</i>	<i>20.441</i>	<i>14.85</i>

Table 3: Actual message sending x self reports concerning low/high sending of e  
messages to the forum.

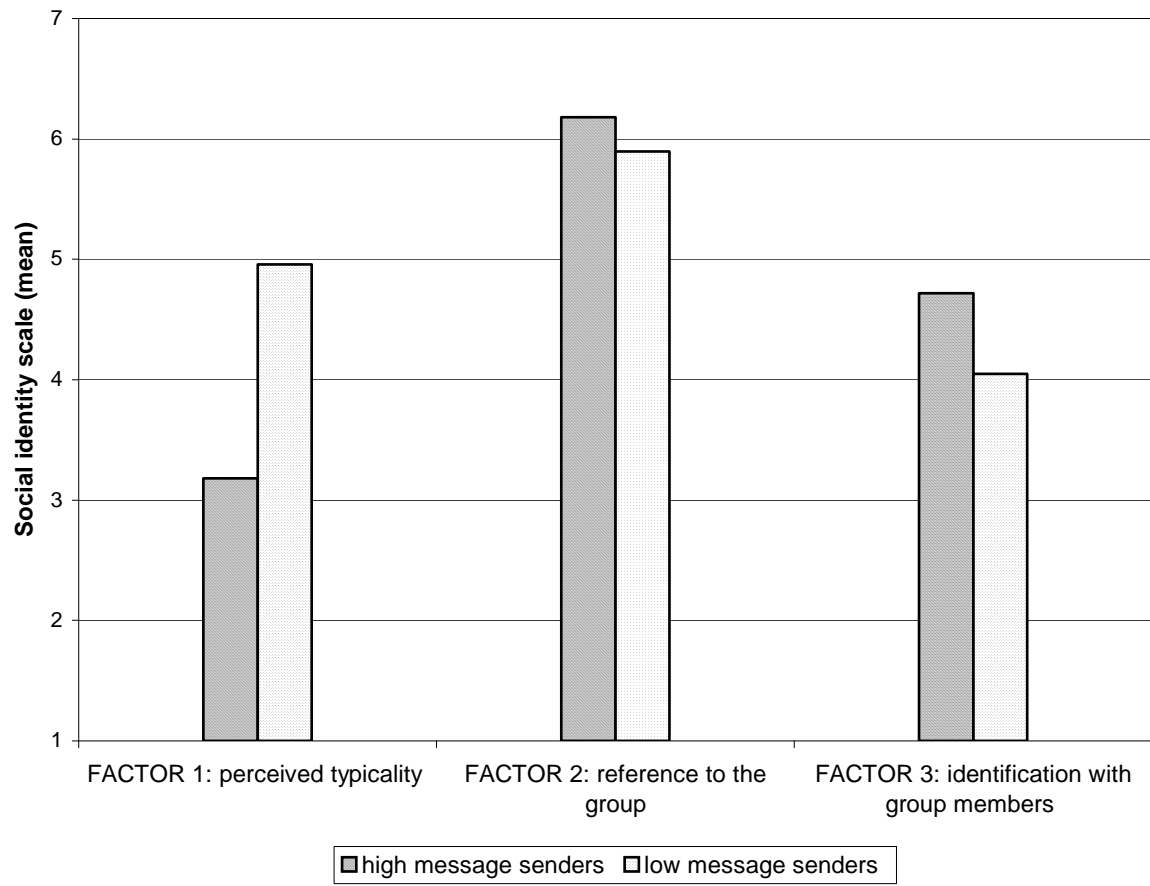
	<b>SELF-REPORTS</b>	
	<b><u>‘High message senders’</u></b>	<b><u>‘low message senders’</u></b>
<b>ACTUAL SENDING</b>  <b><u>High message senders</u></b>	<b>Actually sent 3 or more publicly recorded messages in the 3 month period Jan-March 2002</b>  <b>N=32</b>	<b>Actually sent 2 or more publicly recorded messages in the 3 month period Jan- March 2002</b>  <b>N=3</b>
<b>ACTUAL SENDING</b>  <b><u>Low message senders</u></b>	<b>Actually sent 2 or fewer publicly recorded messages in the 3 month period Jan- March 2002</b>  <b>N=3</b>	<b>Actually sent 1 or fewer publicly recorded messages in the 3 month period Jan-March 2002</b>  <b>N= 21</b>

Factors x forum usage

Figure captions:

Figure 1: SIT FACTORS: High message senders compared with low message senders in the SENCO forum (N=84)

Figure1



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